



18 months - 3 years

# Connecting through play

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By 18 months your child is becoming more vocal and more mobile. Their uniqueness becomes more apparent and their strengths and challenges more visible. Even though they are developing a need for independence their need for emotional connection is even stronger.

## Building Confidence

Playing with your toddler builds confidence, trust and a bond that will last forever. It lets the child know he or she is loved, appreciated and worth your time.

Play time is a great opportunity to:

- Role model appropriate behavior
- Provide guidance and support
- Teach empathy
- Develop physical skills

## Be Sensitive

It is important to have realistic expectations. Through play, parents can also teach their children how to regulate their emotions by helping them name their feelings and have them validated. You want your child to know that any feeling is safe to have in this relationship. It is only with your presence and unconditional love that a true connection can be made.

Every activity is an opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your child. Slow down, take notice and just be with them. Allow them to guide you. You don't have to be perfect. They love you so much they will give you many chances to get it right.

So don't just play with your child, connect with them.

## Making Playtime count

Remember all children differ greatly in their emotional characteristics. For example, some are more reactive and more easily frustrated than others. These differences will start to show, as your child grows and develops as they try to achieve lots of new tasks.

The following activities are examples of how you can interact with your child, be creative and most importantly enjoy yourself!

- Use homemade puppets to “talk” to your child.
- Make your own “touch and feel” book from odds and ends around the house. Include materials of different textures, such as cardboard, sandpaper, bubble-wrap, and cotton-wool.
- Encourage your child to be physically active by spending time outdoors, playing ball games or exploring your local park.
- Old cardboard boxes and sheets make ideal cubby-houses.

## The role of Digital technology

Your child is a digital native. They have been born into a world that is full of digital technologies – television, computers, tablets, digital music devices, mobile phones, DVDs, the internet, Skype and computer games. The temptation is to make sure your baby has lots of exposure,

to ensure they have every advantage possible for their future life.

Children are very attracted to the rapidly changing colours and bright lights of many digital devices. However, it is strongly advised to avoid or limit exposure to television, computers, tablets, mobile devices and playstations. There is no evidence that digital devices will assist or enhance your child's learning. Interacting with people is the best way to enhance a child's learning. It is very difficult for a child to gain visual information from a screen. Digital devices also distract children from important investigations of their environment and other play activities. Using the television as a form of babysitting or a distraction to keep your child occupied, can also result in a habit being formed.

If you do decide to allow your child to watch television or play with a digital device as they grow ensure that:

- It is for a short periods only
- Programs or digital activities are appropriate to the age of your child
- You are with them and you talk to them about what is happening.

Now is also a good time to review your own usage of technology. If you tend to spend a lot of time on your mobile phone or computer, consider leaving it until your child is asleep.

## Read to your child

It's never too early to begin reading to your child. Reading helps to develop your child's literacy skills which will eventually help them when they begin to write their name and read books themselves. Make it a fun and engaging experience and encourage your child to point out characters and colours and use their imagination. Best of all, reading a story gives you special one-on-one time with your child.

**Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:**

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
  - Breastfeeding
  - Infant nutrition
  - Toddler behaviour
  - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
  - Postnatal depression and anxiety

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